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There's more to salt than taste.

Although many people think of salt primarily as a flavor enhancer, it has other myriad properties that make it a critical ingredient in cooking and preserving foods. Salt is a texture aid, color developer and preservative, and it enables chefs and home cooks to create—and enjoy—many kinds of foods.

Salt's properties

- Flavor enhancer – Commonly used to season foods in cooking and at the table.
- Preservative – Keeps foods such as meat and vegetables from spoiling by inhibiting the growth of microorganisms that destroy food. Common dishes and foods preserved using salt include salt cod, corned beef, prosciutto, pancetta, lox, anchovies, sauerkraut, kimchi and olives.
- Color developer – Helps foods, such as carrots and broccoli retain color during cooking; blanching vegetables in salt water prior to freezing retains color.
- Fermentation control – When making bread, beer or pickles, salt controls the fermentation process. For example, when making bread dough, adding salt after the yeast is partly fermented helps create a nice texture in the bread.
- Texture aid – In fresh foods, helps retain crispness; for processed foods helps create an appealing “mouth feel.”
- Moderating bitterness – Adding salt to leafy greens, green vegetables and other naturally bitter foods reduces bitterness.
- Intensifying sweetness – Small amount of salt in foods such as caramel, taffy, fudge and chocolate intensifies sweetness.

So the next time you bake bread, pickle cucumbers or make a chocolate sauce—think salt.

Salt Goes Gourmet

Table salt is not the only kid on the playground anymore. Chefs and home cooks looking for exotic seasonings now have many types of salt to choose from.

- Coarse Kosher Salt – A flake salt long used to prepare meat according to the requirements of Jewish law. Dissolves more easily than table salt. Morton Salt Kosher Salt is the only branded kosher salt on the market.

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- Sea Salt – Harvested from the ocean and allowed to evaporate naturally by the sun and wind. Morton Salt harvests its sea salt from the Mediterranean Sea, off of Spain’s Costa Blanca region.
- Fleur de Sel – A type of sea salt hand-harvested by salt farmers off the coast of Brittany, France. Often looks grey or pinkish because of the minerals or algae that are also collected during the harvesting process.
- Hawaiian Sea Salt – Gets its distinctive pink color from baked volcanic red clay, which is added to provide iron oxide. Used in many traditional Hawaiian dishes.
- Smoked Salt – Dark brown, consists of evaporated sea salt and wood smoke. Used to add a mellow smoky flavor to meats and vegetables.

Salt: Essential for Health

Salt is an essential nutrient for good health and our taste buds are wired to seek out salt in food.

Comprised of 60 percent chloride and 40 percent sodium, salt regulates fluids, helps the nervous system function properly and keeps our muscles, including the heart, moving. Too little sodium in the body can prevent the brain, heart and muscle cells from working properly—and can even be fatal.

About 15 percent of our salt intake comes from table salt. According to the Chicago-based Institute of Food Technologists, a not-for-profit scientific group, we consume the same amount of salt today as we did about 25 years ago.

Sources:

1. The Salt Institute
2. Institute of Food Technologists, “Slashing Sodium No Simple Answer,” Feb 24, 2005



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